Ambassador to the United States; James J. Zogby, president, Arab American Institute, and John J. Zogby, president, Zogby International, and their mother, Celia Zogby; and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa.

Remarks to the Delaware State Legislature in Dover, Delaware

May 8, 1998

Thank you, Governor. I took good notes: No children on a child care waiting list; all poor 4-year-olds in Head Start; every classroom wired. I'll be saying that now every time I go to another city or another State; I'll be saying, if Delaware can do it, why can't you. And I thank you.

I want to thank the Governor, and Senator Sharp, Speaker Spence, Lieutenant Governor Minner, the members of the legislature, the judiciary, the State officials who are here; former Governors Peterson and Tribbitt, and other distinguished citizens of this State; Mr. Mayor. I'm delighted to be joined today by the Secretary of Defense, who is going with me to Dover Air Base when we finish here to thank our air men and women there for their distinguished service, and who has also been a leader in education, because the Department of Defense runs schools all over the world for American children—by our wonderful Secretary of Education, Dick Riley; by Mickey Ibarra, the Director of our Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; and others. We are all delighted to be here.

And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to Congressman Castle for coming up here with me. He's an old friend of mine. We worked together on welfare reform more than a decade ago now. I have been trying to decide, when Mike and Tom changed jobs, which one really got the promotion. [*Laughter*]

I am delighted to be the first President ever to speak here. The others did not know what they were missing. I love your Capitol Building. I like the feel of your legislature. I like the size of your legislature. [*Laughter*] I wonder if it would take a constitutional amendment to reduce Congress to this size. [*Laughter*] It's a wonderful idea.

And I like the fact that the first State in the Nation is leading in doing the Nation's first business of educating our children. I've come here to talk about that work, why it is—in the States and in many communities around the country and must be in Washington the work of both Republicans and Democrats—why it must be a national crusade to give our children the world's best education.

We have a history of putting nation above party when the Nation's security and future are at issue. We did it for 50 years, which is why the cold war turned out the way it did. The tradition was deeply honored by Secretary Cohen, who left a distinguished career in the United States Senate as a Republican Senator from Maine to joint our administration, and he is performing well for the American people as Secretary of Defense.

It is a tradition embodied by your Senators, Bill Roth and Joe Biden, who led the recent stunningly successful effort to expand NATO to include Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. And you should be very proud of both of them.

And I have seen it, having had the opportunity to work for years now with Mike Castle and Tom Carper when they were in both jobs in succession, on welfare reform, on child care, on the education of our children. And you can be very proud of both of them.

And Delaware, maybe because it's a small State and maybe because I came from a small State and was often ridiculed for it in national politics—my experience is that maybe because we're smaller, people learn to treat each other as people. They learn to listen to people on opposite sides of the aisle. They learn that they don't have all the answers and that everybody's got a valuable perspective, and that in the end, we all have to get together and do something that moves our country or our State or our community forward. And for all of that, I am very grateful to the State of Delaware.

Thomas Jefferson once said of your State that ''Delaware is like a diamond, small, but having within it inherent value.'' If he were today, here, giving this speech, he might say, being as he was a modern thinker, Delaware is like a silicon chip—[*laughter*]—small, but having within it enormous inherent value; namely, the power to shape the future.

You have always looked to the future, from the time you did become the first State to ratify the Constitution. It was the beginning of many firsts: Delaware was the first State to produce a transatlantic iron steamship; then there was the first commercial telephone call between an airplane and a moving car, 100 years later—some of us would probably like it if telephone calls on airplanes and cars were not possible—[*laughter*]—all the way to the remarkable innovations now being dreamed up in the DuPont labs.

All of this is dramatically changing the world. The Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, came by the White House for one of our periodic meetings a few days ago, and we were talking about this incredible economy. And he said, ''You know, we really are living in an economy of ideas.'' He said, ''There is a measure of a nation's output in wealth compared to its physical output, the literal physical density of all the goods that are produced.'' He said, ''The measure is more skewed now than ever before. There is hardly any increase in the mass of what we're producing, but the wealth of what we're producing is exploding. Why? Because ideas are driving the increase in the wealth of the Nation.''

Today we learned that our unemployment rate has dropped to 4.3 percent, the lowest since 1970. That is particularly impressive in light of the fact that inflation now is the lowest in more than 30 years, homeownership is at an all-time high, the welfare rolls are the lowest in 27 years, the crime rate is the lowest in 24 years.

Our social fabric is mending. We saw that teen pregnancy had had a substantial drop for the 2d year in a row, something I know that the Governor has been passionately committed to. Our leadership in the world is still unrivaled, although we seem sometimes to be in some doubt about it here at home.

In Delaware your unemployment is all the way down to 3.4 percent. You've had tens of thousands of new jobs, twice the rate of new business growth as 5 years ago.

The thing I would like to say about all this is, no one can claim full responsibility for it. There was not a totally coordinated strategy, but it did not happen by accident. America has been on the same page, from our strategy in Washington to balance the budget, invest in our people, and expand trade—to the entrepreneurs, to the scientists and technicians, to the teachers in our schools and the people who run our business and the folks who work in our factories. We have been on the same page. Good things don't happen by accident, even when millions—even hundreds of millions of people are responsible.

And we must be on the same page when it comes to education. Before I get into what I want to say about education, I want to make a point I tried to make in the State of the Union. I've had a lot of people—people who are primarily political people, good people but people who normally think about things in political terms—say to me, ''Well, you know, why don't you just relax and start playing golf 3 times a week. I mean, you've got low unemployment, low inflation; people are suspicious of Government; why don't—just don't do much and everybody will be happy.'' There is an answer to that. And the answer is that that might be a decent prescription for a static time, but in a dynamic time, where things are changing very rapidly, the fact that things are good in the moment does not guarantee they will be good 5 months or 5 years from now, because they're changing. So you have to keep working to stay ahead of the curve. And those of us in public life have to work no less than entrepreneurs do.

If you go to Silicon Valley, you don't see anybody out there sort of laying down on the job just because the stock prices are high, because they know how dynamic the world is. And there is a second answer, which is that we still have some very profound challenges that, if left unmet, will come back to haunt us in the 21st century. What are they? I can only tell you what I think they are. I think, first of all, in Washington we have to reform our major programs of social cohesion, Social Security and Medicare, for the needs of the 21st century and for the reality that the baby boomers are going to retire, and when they do, there will only be about two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. The present systems are unsustainable as they are. We have to

change them, consistent with our values and the real facts.

Two, we have to prove that you can grow the economy without destroying the environment. And we have to convince people in developing countries that they can and to embrace new technologies to do that. Just a few days ago I was out in California at a low-income/moderate-income housing development which is cutting by 40 percent the energy usage on low-income housing, using solar panels that are not now those big, heavy things you've seen on the roof, but that look just like ordinary shingles, using windows that keep over half the heat in in the wintertime and over half the heat out in the summertime and still let more light in, and other basic things like that. We have to prove that we can make environmental preservation and economic growth go hand in hand.

The third thing we've got to do is to bring the spark of enterprise to poor inner-city communities and rural communities, including Native American ones that haven't felt it.

The fourth thing we have to do is to prove that we can live together as one America in an increasingly diverse society.

The fifth thing we have to do, I would argue, is to prove that we can lead the world after the cold war in a consistent, firm way toward peace and prosperity and freedom and democracy.

But none of that will matter if we don't save our children. And that's what I want to talk about today—only one aspect of it, but in some ways the most important one. And Delaware, again, is leading the Nation. So I may be preaching to the choir, but that's not all bad. I'll polish the sermon and see if I do better in other places.

The condition of education in America and the importance of it and the impact it's going to have on all our futures, as well as all our children, demands action from all of us, in Washington, in State capitals, in communities all across the country. Many of our greatest challenges don't fall under the authority of Washington, nor should they. I have supported giving States more authority in the area of welfare reform and in many other areas. Secretary Riley has cut by two-thirds the burden of regulations coming out of Federal education aid. We started two new programs, Goals 2000 and School-to-Work, without a single new Federal regulation.

The Federal Government can't do all this. Some of our major challenges don't even fall primarily under State government, nor should they. The power and the responsibility of America to meet the challenges of the 21st century rests with all levels of government and with all sectors of society. Sometimes more with the private sector; sometimes more with its most fundamental unit, the American family. And that is as it should be.

But just because responsibility and power are dispersed doesn't mean that we don't all have to ask ourselves: What power do we have to have a positive impact; what is our responsibility? And then we have to move, because a revolution in education will not occur by accident any more than the revolution in the American economy has occurred by accident, even though there will be millions of people working on it, and we may not all be calling each other on the phone every day.

Yesterday I talked to mayors from all over the country; I received their report on what they think should be done. Their agenda is very much like yours and very much like mine.

I suppose that I've spent more time on education than any other thing in my 20 years and more in public life now. Nearly 10 years ago, when I was a Governor of my State, I stayed up almost all night down at the University of Virginia at President Bush's Education Summit, working with Republican Governors to write goals for education for the year 2000. It was clear then—it was clear way back in 1983, when the ''Nation At Risk'' report was issued, and it is certainly clear today, that if we are going to prepare our children for the 21st century, we cannot hope to do it unless we can say with a straight face, ''We are giving them the best education in the world. Not just a few of them, but all of them.''

And we can all say, ''Well, we can't be responsible for every teacher. We can't be responsible for every principal. We can't be responsible for every home. We can't be responsible for every unmotivated child.''

That's all true, but we can play the odds. Secretary Cohen runs, arguably, the most effective organization in the entire United States. Not every soldier, not every airman, not every marine, not every sailor is a stunning success, but they've got a pretty good system. And it didn't happen by accident. And we should take that as our responsibility.

It seems to me the keys are high expectations, high standards, and high performance, fueled by more opportunity, more accountability, and more choice. Secretary Riley and I have worked at this for more than 5 years. In one area, we have been especially successful and widely supportive across partisan lines and in States and local communities. We've opened the doors to higher education wider than ever before.

The Balanced Budget Act I signed last year represented the greatest expansion of college opportunity since the GI bill was passed 50 years ago, with college tuition tax credits, including the $1500 a year HOPE scholarship for the first 2 years of college, education IRA's, expanded Pell grants, deductibility of interest on student loans, 300,000 more work-study slots, another 100,000 young people earning education credits by serving in the national service program, AmeriCorps, and lifetime learning credits for adults who have to go back to school.

All of these things together mean that any American who is willing to study and work hard can get an education in college, and that is very important. It will change the face and the future of America. We learned in the 1990 census that Americans, younger American workers who were high school dropouts, high school graduates, or who had less than 2 years of post-high school education, were likely to get jobs where their incomes went down over time compared to inflation. Those that had at least 2 years of post-high school training were likely to get and keep jobs where their incomes went up. So that was fundamentally important, and we can all be proud of it. And many States have done more to try to give scholarships and make college more affordable, and that's important.

The Senate just this week—and I want to compliment them—passed 91 to 7 what I have called the ''GI bill'' for workers—it basically consolidates this incredible tangle of Federal training programs into a skills grant, so that if a person is unemployed or underemployed and eligible, you just get basically the skills grant and then you decide where to take it. Since nearly every American lives within driving distance of a community college or some other very efficient institution, we no longer need the Federal Government micromanaging the definition of all these training programs, and we don't need anybody in the way of it.

Now, we have some provision, particularly that the Governors wanted who live in rural areas—who have lots of people in rural areas that may not have readily available services, but this is very important. And we've got to resolve the differences now in the House and the Senate bill and pass it. This is a huge thing. And the Congress can be proud of it, and the country can be proud of it.

But with all that said and done, I don't think there is a person here who would dispute the following two statements: We have the best system of higher education in the world; we do not have the best system of elementary and secondary education in the world. You don't have to criticize your favorite teacher. You can honor the PTA leaders and the school board members. No one believes it's the best in the world. And until it is, we can't rest. That is the bottom line.

The budget that I have presented, which is a balanced budget, has the biggest commitment in history from the Federal Government to K through 12 education. But we all know that's less than 10 percent of the total. Still, I think it's important that the National Government focus on results, because things don't happen by accident. I think we should focus on high standards, real accountability, more choice, and finally, I'd like to say a word about safe schools, because that is a problem in some parts of our country.

First, there's no substitute for standards. I want to compliment Delaware for what you're doing. This week, 3d, 5th, 8th, and 10th graders all over the State are participating in your new assessment process to see how well they're doing in reading, writing, and math. And you're going to add other subjects, the Governor told me, in the next couple of years. You also have done something

that may give us a key to how to solve the national issue, which is that about a quarter of your exam questions are apparently taken from the National Assessment of Education Progress, which is a national test most States participate in, but by definition, it's only given to a representative sample of students, not all students. I compliment you on that. I think that is a brilliant reform.

And I think it's important that we find a way to have national standards and exams at least in the basics. It is very important. Secretary Riley and I were talking on the way out; he was talking about South Carolina still having quite an old State test. We had some old State tests when I was Governor of Arkansas. Our kids just knocked the top off of them, the same test we'd been giving for years. And then when we took a national test that was current, we didn't do so well. So without in any way undermining local control of the schools or the constitutional responsibility of the States for education, we need to have a set of national standards and an accountability system which tells us all honestly how we're doing.

We're working hard now with an independent nonpartisan board—the acronym known to all the education experts in the audience is the NAGB Board. We've got Republicans and Democrats on the board and people I don't even have any idea what their political affiliation is, all of whom are simply committed to educational excellence. And we want to find ways to coordinate with the States and the State tests to avoid unnecessary costs and burdens. You may have found a way to do it in Delaware, by having a test that is both rooted in your State standards and encompassing national questions. But it's a very good start.

The second thing we have to do, and I understand the Governor said you were debating that, that may be tougher, is figure out what the accountability system is. Now, a lot of these questions should definitely be decided by people at the State and the local level. But let me, first of all, say that no test is worth a flip unless there is some consequences, not just negative ones but positive, not just what you do to the students but what the rest of us have to do for the education system based on the consequences of the test.

We have to start by demanding accountability from the students, and I strongly believe that we should end the practice of so-called social promotion everywhere in the country. For many years there was a current theory in America that, well, it hurt a child's self-esteem too much to be held back and the child could maybe pick it up next year. And besides that, children do learn at different paces. That is absolutely true, especially in the early years, the dramatically different learning patterns of children in the early years.

Then sooner or later, somehow, parents figured out that one reason kids dropped out of school in the 9th or 10th grade is because the material was going over their heads. It didn't mean anything to them, so why should they sit around, because they weren't able to do the work. And then even the kids figured out that being 20 years old and not being able to fill out an employment application and not being able to even read your high school diploma was far more destructive of self-esteem than spending another year in some grade along the way.

Then, school districts began to figure out that they didn't necessarily have to hold people back if they had proper after-school help and a little help in the summer, where a lot of kids having learning problems forget huge chunks of what they learned the year before.

So we're now kind of coming to grips with this. I have often talked about the Chicago system; it probably had the most widely condemned school system in the country because they had a strike every year whether they needed it or not, for one thing, and because they weren't producing results. Now, the Chicago summer school system—they've ended social promotion. You have to go to summer school if you fail the test and you want to go on to the next grade. Their summer school is the fifth biggest school district in America—the summer school. They have thousands of children going to school after school so many hours that thousands of them actually take three hot meals a day in the schools, in an inner-city environment where they're safe, they're not getting in trouble, and nobody's hurting them.

Now, if a place that has those kinds of challenges can take them on, every place in America can take them on. I've asked Congress to pass what we call education opportunity zone legislation, that will basically give extra resources to schools in poor communities if they will insist on high standards in social promotion, demand performance from students and teachers, and actually support the kids that are in trouble and give them the extra help they need. I hope Congress will pass it.

Again, I say, in many ways we're following your lead. And I urge you to have a big vigorous debate on this—what are the consequences of this exam. And I wouldn't presume to tell you what to do, but I can make two observations based on 20 years of working, and hours and hours and hours spent in classrooms listening to teachers and watching things unfold.

One is, nobody will take your system seriously unless there are consequences. Two is, if there are consequences, whatever you decide they are, they cannot be exclusively negative ones; they must also be positive, because you have to believe that—in order to believe in democracy, you have to believe that almost everybody can learn almost everything they need to know to make this country run right, which means almost everybody in the world can succeed in school. And if they're not, it's probably not entirely their fault. So there should be consequences; some of them should be negative. But there must be positive ones as well. And I wish you well, and I can assure you the rest of us are going to be watching.

The next thing I think we have to do is to develop and demand accountability and performance from teachers but also support them. I had the great pleasure this week—or last week—of hosting the Teachers of the Year at the White House. And that's one of the happiest days of the year. You'll never find 50 more upbeat people than the teachers that are selected Teachers of the Year. And you talk to these people, and you can't imagine that there's ever been a problem in American education.

The man who was named National Teacher of the Year is a teacher from Virginia who teaches history and social studies and who makes his kids role-play. So they play ancient Athenians and Spartans debating the Greek wars. They play Jefferson and Adams debating each other about fundamental questions of what the real notion of the Union that we all belong to is. I mean, it was exhilarating.

Those are the kind of teachers that we wish all our children had all the time. And I think we need to do more to reward teachers who strive for excellence. One of the things that we can do at the national level that I hope you will support, that Tom and Mike's former colleague, Governor Jim Hunt, has worked his whole career on, is to support the master teacher program, the National Board for Professional Teacher Certification. It's a completely voluntary thing which qualifies teachers based on, number one, their complete academic preparation for the course they're teaching, and number two, their success in teaching, and thirdly, I might add, their ability to help other teachers improve their teaching skills.

Now, today there are only a few hundred master teachers in America. My balanced budget contains enough funds to certify 100,000 master teachers. When we get one of these teachers in every school building in America—every school building in America—going to the teachers' lounge, going to the faculty meetings, talking to the principals, it will change the culture of education in America. Every other profession in the country, just about, has national board certification. And believe me, this is a good thing that is a worthy investment.

Finally, let me say, I believe that if teachers don't measure up after getting all the support and help they need, there ought to be a swift process, fair but swift—it should not be endless—to resolve the matter in a satisfactory way. Because you're not doing anybody any favors—no one—fundamentally, nobody is happy doing something they're not good at. You can never make me believe anybody is really happy when they know deep down inside they're not doing the job. So there has to be some system that is perfectly fair to every teacher but doesn't take from now to kingdom come to resolve the matter in a way that allows the education system to go forward.

Now, I also think as we demand responsibility for results from the schools, we have to give the tools they need to the students and the teachers. I've said that, and I will say it again. Let me just mention one or two things. First, smaller class sizes. Children in some classes in America are in classes that are so big and crowded, there is no way any teacher—I don't care how good he or she is—can deal with all the challenges that are presented—where classes are so big where the students are barely known by name to the teacher, much less the particular circumstances of their lives. Given the fact that so many kids have so many troubles today, it's very, very important. In classrooms like this, teachers are often forced to teach to the middle, leaving both the best kids and the most troubled kids behind.

The Department of Education and Secretary Riley today are releasing a report on class size and learning, basically reaffirming what Hillary and I have long believed. We adopted very rigorous class sizes for our State 15 years ago. When class sizes go down enough, learning goes up—that's what the report shows—especially in the early years. And when children come from disadvantaged backgrounds, small classes can make an even greater difference.

Let me just give you a few examples from the study. In Tennessee, test scores were consistently higher among students that were in classes of fewer than 20 students. These children kept the edge even when they moved into larger classes in their later years of schooling. From Wisconsin, North Carolina, and classrooms across the country, other studies confirm the same findings.

Governor Carper and many of you here today are trying to reduce class size. I just want to encourage you and tell you that I have presented to the Congress a plan to do the same thing, which would not in any way conflict with what you're doing, but will enable you to get some funds to support it.

Today I'm sending legislation to Congress cosponsored by Senators Murray and Kennedy and Congressman Clay that will make class size reduction a national goal and, if enacted, would help school districts to hire another 100,000 teachers, which is about the number necessary, properly distributed across the country, to give us average class size of 18 in the first three grades. It would also require the new teachers to pass competency exams to make sure they have the training and preparation they need. Many States now require this anyway.

The second thing I'd like to say is Delaware may be the only State now where every classroom is wired, but every classroom should be wired. You remember, I'm sure, a few years ago, the Vice President and I went to San Francisco and got with a lot of people from the big computer companies and said that we wanted to try to wire every classroom and library by the year 2000. And we are making great headway. We've got more than twice as many classrooms and libraries wired today as we did just 3½ years ago when we did that. We have in the budget now funds to continue this urgent national priority. I hope that will pass.

But finally, let me say, believe it or not, we've got—an enormous percentage of the school buildings in this country are ill-equipped to take the wiring because they're so old. We have cities in this country with average school buildings—average school buildings—over 65 years old and in terrible shape. I was in a small, growing district in Florida the other day where there were not 1, not 5, but 17 trailers outside the main school building there for the kids.

Now, when you come to work here every day in this Capitol it makes you feel good, doesn't it? It's a beautiful building and you've obviously put a lot of funds into restoring it, and it makes you feel good. It says you're important. It matters to be a member of the Delaware Legislature. One of the ways you know without anybody telling you is you come into this nice building, and it's important. And if grown-ups are affected by their surroundings, children are even more so.

What does it say to an inner-city kid from a poor family if they go to a school building every day and one of the whole floors is closed for want of repair? What does it say about how important those children are if every day they walk through the front door and they look up and see three or four broken windows? What does it say if the blackboard is only half there because it's been

cracked? What about the kids in the crowded school districts?

You know, the first year or two, if you show up and there are a lot of house trailers, it's kind of exciting because it means you've got a growing district and a lot of stuff going on. After 5 or 6 years, it means things aren't getting better. It's a very different message. And the important thing is not whether the buildings are old or not, it is whether they are safe, clean, light, whether they send the message that this is a place where learning can occur, and this is a place where children are important.

Now, I think education is a part of the national infrastructure. That's why I wanted the Federal Government to help places who need it wire all the classrooms and libraries. And I have proposed for the first time that we help with the infrastructure needs of school districts—again, not in any way that would conflict with what any State or local school district is doing but, instead, to reinforce it.

This budget contains funds that would help us to modernize 5,000 schools and build 1,000 new ones. It would be a very good start on the incredible infrastructure needs of America's schools. And for people who say it doesn't matter, just think how you feel when you come through these doors every day. It does matter, and I hope we can pass it.

The third thing I'd like to emphasize very briefly is that we need greater choice in our schools. We do need more competition. You mentioned the Charter School of Wilmington, Governor, and other charter schools in your State. When I was elected President in 1992, there was only one charter school in the entire country, public schools that tailor their programs to meet the needs and demands of their customers, the students and their parents. Since then, I've done everything I could to support them.

Today, there are 800 charter schools, 32 of our 50 States authorize them. Just last week in an overwhelming bipartisan vote, California voted in the legislature to create another 100 charter schools a year in our largest State. That's great, great news—100 a year. They had a 150 cap, I think, on the whole State. They blew off the cap and said, ''This is working''—and I've been in some of them out there, they are working—''We want 100 a year.''

Now, my goal is to have 3,000 by the year 2000 in the whole country, and I have presented a budget to Congress which would give communities around the country any start-up funds they need to do this. It's not so easy to do if you've never thought about it and never done the work and if you come from a place with limited resources. So I did present some money in the budget to do that. But I hope you will support that.

Delaware has been at the forefront of the charter school movement. It is a good, good thing to do, along with having statewide public school choice plans. And I applaud you for yours.

The fourth thing I'd like to talk just a little about is school safety. You know, it's pretty hard to learn if you feel insecure. One of the main reasons that I supported the school uniform movement, not as a mandatory thing but where people needed it, was that I thought it would make our schools safer. And I've been around the country and seen a lot of schools that had terrible discipline problems. And we're worried about the safety of the kids going to and from school. And in every case where they had a terrible problem and adopted a uniform policy, it made a big difference. We want to do more to ensure our children's safety. We want to make sure that our children are exposed to teachers and team leaders, not drug dealers and gang leaders.

There are a lot of things we can do. Let me just mention one thing. We are trying in this budget to give States and communities more funds to support even wider and more extensive after-school programs, not only because they're important educationally—which they are, and that's their primary mission—but because almost all kids get in trouble after school lets out and before the folks get home from work. A huge percentage of juvenile crime is committed between 3 and 6 or 7 at night. And if we can have extensive after-school programs, we can make our children safer and our schools safer. Let me also—even one hand is good on that. [*Laughter*]

Today the Department of Education is releasing a report which also shows we're doing a better job as a country in detecting guns in the schools. That's really good—that's the good news. The bad news is there are a lot of guns in the schools and other weapons. In 1997 more than 6,000 students were expelled for bringing firearms to school. But I think that means we must continue and bear down on this policy of zero tolerance for guns in our schools.

And again, it works to prevent problems. The superintendent of the Alexandria, Virginia, schools—which, by the way, is now the most diverse school district in America; Fairfax County has kids from 180 different racial and ethnic groups, speaking over 100 native languages. But because they have a rigorous zero tolerance program, they have cut suspendable offenses over the past couple of years by more than 40 percent. It works. And we can have those results all over the country.

But let me say, going back to an issue you're debating, Secretary Riley asked all these school security experts what they thought we could do as a people, not just the Federal Government, to make the schools safer. And they said, interestingly enough, one of the most important things we could do is to create the smallest possible classes in the early grades, because the kids with problems would be found by the teachers. And then the teachers and the families and the counselors could work together to try to prevent these kids from getting in trouble in the first place. I thought it was a stunning thing, amazing.

So Delaware is leading the Nation, and the Nation must follow. And we must, Republicans and Democrats together, all Americans, make a commitment to a revolution in standards and accountability, in choice and safety, based on high expectations, accountability, and performance. It will take all of our commitment to do the job, but the challenge must be met because America can't become what it ought to be if we don't.

We can do this. This is not rocket science. This is an affair of the mind which most of us can comprehend. Fundamentally, it is also an affair of the heart. We know—we know—that the best days of this country are still ahead. You may be the oldest State, but you still want to have the longest future. And the only way we can do it is with this.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. in the Senate Chamber. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Tom Carper and Lt. Gov. Ruth Ann Minner of Delaware; President Pro Tempore Thomas B. Sharp, Delaware State Senate; Speaker Terry R. Spence, Delaware State House of Representatives; former Governors Russell W. Peterson and Sherman W. Tribbitt of Delaware; Mayor James L. Hutchinson of Dover; and Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Proposed "Class-Size Reduction and Teacher Quality Act of 1998"

May 8, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit today for your immediate consideration and enactment the ''Class-Size Reduction and Teacher Quality Act of 1998.'' This legislative proposal would help States and local school districts recruit, train, and hire 100,000 additional well-prepared teachers in order to reduce the average class size to 18 in grades 1 through 3 in our Nation's public schools. It is an essential part of our overall effort to strengthen public schools throughout the Nation.

As schools across the Nation struggle to accommodate a surge in enrollments, educators and parents have become increasingly concerned about the impact of class size on teaching and learning, particularly in the critically important early grades, where students learn reading and other basic skills. This concern is justified: rigorous research confirms what parents and teachers have long believed—that students in smaller classes, especially in the early grades, make greater educational gains and maintain those gains over time. These gains occur because teachers in small classes can provide students with more individualized attention, spend more time on instruction and less time on discipline, and cover more material effectively. Moreover, the benefits of smaller classes are greatest for poor, minority, and inner-city